

IN CONTEXT / HERB KEINON

Acquittals stir debate

Ya'acov Ne'eman: Not guilty. Rafael Eitan: Not guilty. Herzliya Mayor Eli Landau: Not guilty. Petah Tikvah Mayor Giora Lev: Not guilty. Eliat Mayor Rafi Hochman: Not guilty.

The above is a partial list of high-level public officials charged in recent years with various offenses and then acquitted in court. Even though other indictments, most notably against former Jewish Agency head Simcha Dinitz and Shas MK Yair Levy, have held up in court, yesterday's acquittal of former justice minister Ne'eman has stirred the debate whether the State Attorney's Office has gotten a bit trigger-happy when it comes to public officials.

"Definitely," said Tel Aviv lawyer Avraham Pachter, formerly a senior deputy district attorney in the Tel Aviv district attorney's office.

In cases involving public officials, Pachter said, "if it is a borderline question whether to indict or not, the penchant is to pass the decision on to the court."

Although on the surface it sounds reasonable to let the courts rule in high-profile cases, Pachter said that the publicity, and the resultant distress it causes the defendant, should be taken into account.

"Do you think that Ya'acov Ne'eman today is the same Ya'acov Ne'eman from before the indictment?" he asked. "The bigger the public figure, the harder he falls. Therefore there has to be much more caution than usual. I hope this standard also filters down to everyone facing an indictment."

But David Kretzmer, a professor of constitutional law at Hebrew University, disputed the notion that the state attorney is too quick to

indict public officials. He said that it is not reasonable to expect that every indictment will result in a conviction. Nor, he said, is an acquittal a sign that somehow the state attorney failed.



Ya'acov Ne'eman (Herb Keinon)

The fact that someone was acquitted says nothing about the decision to indict him. When the decision is made to indict someone, it is taken

on the basis of evidence at hand, not knowing the line of defense, or how the defendant will try to refute the charges," Kretzmer said.

The state attorney, Kretzmer said, is in the impossible situation of being damned if she does hand down indictments, and damned if she doesn't.

"Can you imagine what would have been said if Ne'eman was not indicted?" Kretzmer said. "People would have screamed that the state attorney is going easy on him because he was justice minister."

The entire debate over the state attorney's decisions to indict is relatively new, Kretzmer said, and is a result of the Supreme Court's judicial activism. Kretzmer said that up until about 10 years ago the Supreme Court was very hesitant about involving itself in the state attorney's decisions on indictments.

This situation ended in the 1980s when the Supreme Court blasted then attorney-general Yosef Harish for not indicting the central figures in the bank-share scandal. Other high-profile instances where the court has expressed displeasure with a decision not to indict were the cases involving former police inspector-general Rafi Peled and NRP MK Avner Shaki.

The decision not to indict Shaki, said Hebrew University political science professor Avraham Diskin, weakens the argument that the state attorney only indicts politicians from the right. But this argument is still heard frequently, and posters asking what happened to the cases against Labor and Meretz politicians Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Yisrael Kessar, and Dedi Zocker, have for days been plastered all over Jerusalem.

ANALYSIS

Torn between loyalties

By SARAH HONG

Had the High Court of Justice ruled on all the cases accruing from the Bar-On Affair on Wednesday, and had it unequivocally removed any legal threats to Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi's remaining in office, it would, paradoxically, have been a lot easier to take Hanegbi's portfolio and give it back to his predecessor, Ya'acov Ne'eman.

But as long as the court keeps Hanegbi dangling, he is politically immune.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is now stuck between a rock and a hard place. He is committed to both Hanegbi and Ne'eman. If he does not let one down, he will be seen as betraying the other. His only safe move - for now - is to do nothing.

That may be precisely what he is going to do.

There have been rumors that a cabinet reshuffle is in the offing. Ne'eman might be reinstated as part of such a reshuffle. But even that cannot be done unless the High Court rejects the petitions demanding Hanegbi's ouster. Removing Hanegbi, even for the most legitimate reasons, while his case is still pending, would be an expression of no-confidence in him. Sources close to Netanyahu say there is no chance this will happen.

The Bar-On Affair has created a bond of a common ordeal between Netanyahu and Hanegbi despite the fact that Hanegbi was obviously not his first choice to be justice

attorney-general Michael Ben-Yair, had already prevented Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan - who was later cleared of charges that at the time were being investigated - from becoming internal security minister.

In Eitan's case the damage done is regarded as irreversible, despite Eitan's considerable political clout. Ne'eman, who comes from outside the political system, carries no such clout.

This is not to say that he does not enjoy support inside the cabinet. Many of those who clamored for Hanegbi's removal in the wake of the Bar-On Affair yesterday seized eagerly on Ne'eman's acquittal. Ne'eman is also popular in the NRP, Shas and in many Likud quarters.

Whether all this could be translated into solid pressure on Ne'eman's behalf is an entirely different question. The new realities created while Ne'eman was clearing his name have made it far from certain that Netanyahu can reinstate him, at least not immediately.

There are various scenarios for resolving the matter, including appointing Ne'eman as a minister without portfolio until a more far-ranging reshuffle is possible.

But the bottom line is that Netanyahu is torn between two loyalties, and will be damned if he does and damned if he doesn't.



Michael Ben-Yair

minister. Netanyahu had picked Ne'eman, who is not an MK, as part of his plan to appoint men of excellence to key posts.

Netanyahu still holds Ne'eman in very high regard. His exoneration was greeted with genuine delight in the government, where it was charged that the former

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Imperfect over unacceptable

Yesterday's acquittal of former justice minister Ya'acov Ne'eman of all the accusations against him marks the end of a nightmare for Ne'eman, but not of the government's troubles in the arena of judicial appointments.

Ne'eman's innocence does not make him an ideal justice minister, but imperfect is an improvement over unacceptable. The court's decision was unusual in its complete rejection of the prosecution's case...

It would, of course, not be a healthy state of affairs if prosecutors only recommended indictments when they were positive that the courts would convict. But the opposite situation, in which prosecutors are too quick to indict public officials, is perhaps even more disturbing.

Democracies rightly lean towards protecting the innocent. The streets of dictatorships might be among the safest in the world, but most people prefer freedom. The other reason is that the public trust of the justice system is one of the great treasures of a democracy.

The Ne'eman acquittal is also an opportunity for Netanyahu to partially correct the damage from the Bar-On Affair in two ways. First, it provides a reasonable way to remove Hanegbi from the Justice Ministry...

Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein said in reacting to the verdict that it is very easy to harm the public's confidence in prosecutors and the courts, and much harder to rebuild that confidence.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

QUOTATIONS

Sir, - In a recent op-ed article ("Hail the elite," May 1), Larry Derfner basically calls on an "elite group of people to save Israel from the majority that elected the present government."

Mazor probably agrees with Derfner that he (Mazor) is part of the elite, and when he opened the three-month investigation, he told several reporters: "We'll show them that we're more than just a bunch of shepherds."

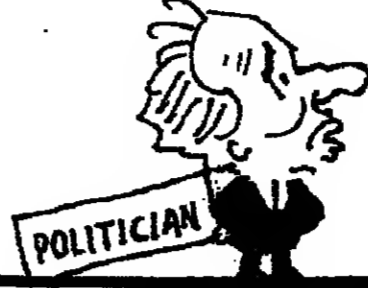
in general. Archie, however, was at least entertaining when he mangled words and invented quotations. And as Archie's wife Edith would agree, Archie was sometimes even cute.

Sir, - Jay Bushinsky's op-ed article of May 7 on the Deir Yassin Memorial calls for the truth, but distorts it at the same time. For example, Bushinsky claims Deir Yassin was laid waste and that it physically no longer exists.

DEIR YASSIN
topographed it. His eyewitness account was made public years ago, although his photographs are still locked up in the Ministry of Defense.

oat. For to do so would undermine the spirit of the many memorials to Jews who have fallen in wars or been slain in massacres throughout their history.

MR. ROBINSON @ 97



Why this fierce self-mutilation?

There is something that I do not understand, something that has, indeed, perplexed me for a long time.

One of the important results of the establishment of the State of Israel was the intense spread, over the last two generations, of the academic study of Judaism throughout the world.

Hundreds of universities, especially in North America and Europe, now teach Hebrew and Jewish studies, and the subject is universally recognized as an integral component of intellectual life.

The history of the Jewish people, Jewish philosophy and mysticism, Hebrew language and literature are perceived as complex disciplines arousing interest among Jews and non-Jews.

Western culture today is comprised of numerous such cultural complexes, each of which retains its particular characteristics. From Ireland to Mexico, from Sicily to Alabama, all present their essential uniqueness, at the same time forming the building blocks of the global cultural and intellectual civilization.

In the first decades after its establishment, the attitude of Israel's secular majority conformed to this universal approach. Judaism was understood as being not only a religious tradition but a national culture too.

JOSEPH DAN

Israel. This situation has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Today, the only place in the world where the variety and complexity, the dynamism and relevance of the Jewish heritage is denied is among the secular community in Israel.

Secular Israelis have torn up their ticket to contemporary global culture

and fellow students, like me, led a secular life. None of us found any inherent contradiction between our dedication to Jewish studies and our adherence to Western values, norms, and methodologies.

In recent years, however, a powerful process of radicalization brought about the emergence of a schism between the haredim and the intensely secular majority.

Judaism came to be regarded more and more as antagonistic to contemporary culture, as if only its rejection could enable one to accept Western norms.

The secular intellectual community developed a deep enmity toward anything it conceived as representing haredi Judaism. This came to include even the Bible, Jewish history, and the history of the Land of Israel, and classical Hebrew literature.

The paradox is that while secular Israelis fiercely reject haredi cultural, social, and religious norms, we

wholeheartedly accept the most important component of the haredi worldview - the one in which they are absolutely wrong - the claim that only the haredim are the sole representatives of Judaism as a whole, past, present, and future, and that only they express "true Judaism."

We vehemently reject haredi claims in every aspect of life,

which recognizes the variety and complexity of Judaism as it does in every other culture.

As a result of this paradox, fewer and fewer secular Israeli students and scholars are dedicating themselves to Jewish studies, while abroad the numbers are increasing, with Jewish studies appealing to a diverse group of people, both Jews and non-Jews.

More and more scholarly books are published abroad, while their number in Israel is decreasing.

Contemporary civilization does not welcome people who hate themselves and cut themselves off from their authentic cultural heritage.

We oppose the haredim in every possible way, yet we are surrendering our identity to them, as well as our ticket to contemporary global culture.

Why? I have no answer. If anyone has, I shall recommend wholeheartedly that he be nominated for a future Israel Prize.

Meanwhile, I can only express the hope that we shall overcome this self-imposed self-mutilation, and recognize that the diversity of Jewish culture can both sustain Israeli spiritual life and serve as a bridge to our integration in the best achievements of Western culture.

At this point, however, things seem to be going in quite the opposite direction.

The writer, Gershon Scholem, professor of Kabbala at the Hebrew University, received this year's Israel Prize for his studies in the history of Jewish mysticism, thought, ethics, and literature.

Silencers & those who shout 'Beware!'

My somewhat gloomy forecast of three years ago in an article on the Ethiopian community entitled "Importing Death" has, to a great extent, been borne out.

It has been confirmed in two official publications: the report of the Navon Commission, which examined the reasons behind the decision not to accept blood donations from Ethiopians; and Chapter 47 of this year's State Comptroller's Report, which deals with AIDS and is largely based on the Navon report.

From both these publications, a dismal picture of establishment recklessness emerges. Despite my condemnation by the Press Council, by the president, and in a High Court decision, I was correct in my pessimistic assessment that the alia of non-Jews and AIDS carriers would be detrimental to the Ethiopian community, and my fears were realized.

Because of what I wrote, I was disqualified as a winner of the Israel Prize and labeled a racist. I can live with the decision that I would not get the prize, also with the besmearing of my good name. The question is whether the Ethiopian community can live with its betrayal by the Israeli establishment.

Naively, that community trusted us - and we betrayed it. We brought upon it the terror of AIDS, a disease for which there is no cure. It is our fault that "the risk of becoming infected with the disease among this community is 500 times greater among males and 400 times greater among females than in the general population" (Navon report, Page 9).

The course of events was as follows: When Ethiopian Jews arrived in Israel in 1984 within the framework of "Operation Moses," the Ministry of Health's epidemiology department discovered there were quite a few cases of malaria among

SHMUEL SCHNITZER

them (it should be noted that later tests showed there were no AIDS carriers). Viral hepatitis was also common (Navon report, Page 15). "Before the arrival of the Operation Solomon immigrants, a grim picture of the rampancy of the AIDS virus among the community residing in Addis Ababa was revealed to the Health Ministry. The decision was taken not to make this information public, but to examine all the immigrants upon their arrival in Israel.

If my thinking cost me the Israel Prize, at least my conscience is clear

"In a meeting of the steering committee on AIDS held on June 27, 1991, Dr. Moshe Mashiah reported that 2 percent of the immigrants tested positive for AIDS antibodies. All branches of the press were requested not to publish this data" (Navon report, Page 17). "One worrisome statistic is that the rate of carriers among the Ethiopian immigrants (Falash Mura) continuing to come to Israel every month is 3-8 percent" (Navon report, Page 9).

The policy of concealment on the part of absorption and health bodies had tragic consequences. Before July 1990, no AIDS carriers were found among those examined. Since then, there has been a rapid increase (Navon report, Page 9), owing to a mistaken policy of indiscriminate immigration. Those who were hurt by this policy were the Ethiopian immigrants themselves.

The low level of awareness among these immigrants of the danger of the disease about which the state comptroller has warned (Pages 206,

know. Its cooperation with the conspiracy of silence shocked me. I decided to ignore its ruling.

Even the president joined those who condemned me. Without examining the facts (he would have had no difficulty in obtaining a copy of the Navon report), he requested that I apologize. With all due respect, I could not. In my opinion, the duty to apologize falls on the silencers.

But most serious of all was one paragraph of the High Court ruling which annulled the minister of education's decision to award me the Israel Prize.

The justices said that the prize committee must reconvene to reconsider its decision. But this time it had to take into account the condemnation by the Press Council and pay attention to "Mr. Schnitzer's current stance relative to what is written in the article."

In other words, the committee was not to assess my work, nor my actions, but my thinking. And if there were grounds for believing that my stubborn brain still formulated forbidden thoughts, the prize must be denied me.

This seems to me the first time that the legal system has examined what a person thinks, as opposed to what he does.

The prize committee, acting as thought police, found that I still harbor forbidden thoughts. I reserve the right to think as I choose. If my thinking cost me the Israel Prize, at least my conscience is clear.

I am not the one responsible for the disease that struck hundreds of members of the Ethiopian community. It is those who kept silent and silenced others who should be held accountable, not those who shouted warnings.

The writer is a senior journalist at Ma'ariv.

POSTSCRIPTS

WE'RE GETTING a bad rap here at the Post, and it's time we set the record straight.

Shortly after we ran an ad that included a product called "Kvetchup," we got a letter from a reader pointing out our humorous error. Then the London Jewish Chronicle published an article needing us for our Freudian slip. It was not a mistake. Some marketing genius came up with that name for a squeezable ketchup bottle. "Kvetchup" it is.

SOMETIMES, A little confusion can be a good thing.

Theresa Terry of Jerusalem relates a story of a woman who forgot which cable channel was used for video viewing. She decided to call a friend for help. But adding to her absent-mindedness, she inadvertently picked up the remote control instead of the telephone, and upon pressing the first two digits of her friend's number, the video screen magically appeared.

PLANS TO build a £10 million Millennium Wheel in London to mark the year 2000 have been approved.

Lambeth Borough Council in south London gave the go-ahead for the 150-meter-high project which will be the world's biggest ferris wheel.

The Millennium Wheel, sponsored by British Airways, will be built on the Thames opposite the Houses of Parliament.

A SAUDI farmer with four wives isn't about to stop marrying despite his age of 110. He's getting married again.

Mohammed al-Bayah, who lives in the farming town of Asir and has 72 children and grandchildren, is allowed a maximum of four wives, according to Islamic law. He will presumably have to divorce one of his four wives before taking another.

Warding off the evil eye

Ehud Barak stole the party establishment right from underneath Shimon Peres, but instead of basking in the glow of his triumph, the retired general is wary of the price of victory, Sarah Honig writes

After the dramatic showdown with Shimon Peres at the Labor Party convention in Tel Aviv on Tuesday night, leadership front-runner Ehud Barak summoned his closest allies and instructed them to make sure he was not applauded too loudly the next day when he entered the auditorium.

The request raised no eyebrows. One of the convention participants later explained that Barak was acting much like an old, superstitious shtetl dweller afraid of the evil eye from those who begrudge his success.

Barak had managed to do the near-impossible by trouncing Peres, the man who had dominated the Labor Party machine for two decades.

Even when the party leadership was narrowly wrested from him by the late Yitzhak Rabin, Peres never slipped from the Labor helm. He won every internal party struggle against Rabin, except for the No. 1 slot.

Barak stole the party establishment right from underneath Peres, but is wary of the price of victory.

Barak had suspected from the outset that Peres wanted the party presidency not because he craved prestige, but as a last-ditch effort to hang on to party leadership. Peres, after all, had already tried other schemes, such as the out-of-the-ordinary non-starters and a push for early elections.

Thus when Barak foiled Peres's final attempt to become co-leader, he could not sit back and savor his success. He was frightened by his own triumph. Indeed, Barak's sworn foe, MK Haim Ramon, warned him that a wounded Peres is far more dangerous than Peres wearing the untried party president hat.

This is why Barak concluded that the convention's second day and the entire run-up to the June 3 leadership primary would have to be an anti-climax to Tuesday's sensation.

Shrewdly, Barak calculated that now is the time to appear to evince sensitivity, which is why he ordered his lieutenants to send word down to the ranks not to applaud him too enthusiastically. He also stipulated that there are to be no cheers, chants, or anything which could be construed as glee - never mind gloating - in the aftermath of the savage beating Peres endured.

Barak can't afford to be cast

as the villain just three weeks before the primary.

This despite the fact that Peres went to a lot of trouble to make it appear that he is not nettled in the least. In an amazing display of aplomb, he sought to claim that no offense was taken. "I didn't need the president title, I didn't even seek it. It wasn't my initiative. Friends came up with the idea and worked for it and I couldn't let them down. I couldn't tell them that they toiled for nothing."

The appointment was not

Barak stipulated that there are to be no cheers, chants or anything which could be construed as glee - never mind gloating - in the aftermath of the savage beating Peres endured.

relations in the party now, no side trusts the other's sincerity.

As the first sitting of the Labor convention wound down, whispers abounded, shadows lurked in corners, and, while everyone strove to appear to talk softly, all the protagonists were careful to carry big sticks just in case.

Barak had to cautiously prepare for any contingency and that meant meticulous care not to look too happy, or popular, and definitely not mean.

But why? It would appear from the ignominious defeat Peres suffered that he is a political goner. Moreover, just as Barak strove to lower the profile of his victory, Peres took pains to lower expectations of his bitter vengeance. He liberally granted interviews to political reporters in which he seemed to let bygones be bygones, vowing not to enter the Netanyahu government on his own, not to bolt Labor and not to set up a breakaway peace party.

On the face of it, Barak has nothing to fear, yet he is a confirmed believer in Peres's near-mythical powers as a political sorcerer.

Even among his most ardent boosters, Barak has the reputation of being a political pariah, and, as the old adage admits, even some paranoids have real enemies, and nothing Barak saw and heard at the convention could induce him to lower his guard. For instance, Barak could not lose sight of Peres's post-convention schedule.

The first item on the itinerary of the tireless Peres, right after he left the convention (just in time to avoid Barak's closing speech), was no less than a meeting with Yasser Arafat under Socialist International auspices.

Several sources close to Barak say he harbors no delusions of a letup in Peres's continued hyperactivity. Peres, who can no longer claim to lead a party, much less a government, obviously has no intention of withdrawing from public life and devoting himself to his memoirs.

If more indications were needed they came from Peres's loyal sidekick MK Dalia Itzik (who nevertheless supports Barak's primary bid). Itzik had warned everyone just after Peres's humiliating rout that the



Ehud Barak embraces a supporter at this week's political convention. (Israel Sun)

alarm bells for Barak by maintaining that Ramon can still challenge Barak a year before elections, when the party will have to ratify his candidacy for prime minister.

Ramon told Barak that it won't be over on June 3 and that he will be waiting to take him on.

Significantly, Peres cheerfully chimed in, saying Ramon was "perfectly right because in a democracy a leader must always face challenges."

Around Barak, Ramon is regarded as a younger, less astute version of Peres who may take more reckless risks. Like Peres, Ramon has little to lose. He expects Barak to wreak vengeance on all his political antagonists as of June 4.

Ramon was pitted against Barak from the day Barak entered politics. They hickered bitterly during last May's elec-

Barak was acting much like an old superstitious shtetl dweller afraid of the evil eye from those who begrudge his success

tion campaign, when they co-managed it, and then spent much energy blaming each other for the debacle.

If Barak wins the primary, as appears more likely now than ever, then Ramon could turn very desperate.

The speculation in the harassed Barak camp now is that Peres may act via the Ramon proxy.

If Peres does not form a new party, perhaps Ramon will do it on his behalf.

A senior source in Barak's inner sanctum also suggested that too much trust should be placed on Peres's denials that he would consider joining the Likud government.

The source noted that such a quasi-national unity move is not even feasible now. The minute it does become a more realistic option, however, Peres will be the first to jump on the bandwagon, the source said.

But Peres need not go to such lengths to hurt Barak, stressed the source. Peres can get his own back by just bad-mouthing Barak and giving the Likud choice quotes to use against Barak in the 2000 elections.

delegates had freed him of all fetters which bind him to the party.

Even after he sought to reassure all and sundry that he "reaches no decisions in moments of anger or agitation,"

she insisted that "Peres did not say the last word. Not everything has been heard from him yet. Things will happen."

She emphasized that she knows what she is talking about. She also said this to

Barak, who was so conciliatory as to phone and congratulate her on her speech to the convention in which she bitterly attacked Barak.

If Itzik's input were not enough, Ramon rang more

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Democracy: Iranian style

Social issues, rather than cries of death to Israel and America, have dominated the campaigning for next week's Iranian elections, Steve Rodan reports

The writer is a 21-year-old Iranian student who hardly remembers Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. It is a plaintive appeal to the Islamic regime that rose from the ashes of the 1978 revolution, an Iranian version of the rock anthem "My Generation." "The suspicion and contempt is growing daily," the student, who remains anonymous, writes in a recent letter to the daily Salam newspaper. "Every minute we uncover more examples of friction and tension, particularly in the university. They are blaming the students, their ideas and even their bad intentions. Everything is placed on the back of my generation that today studies in the university. The gap that separates my generation from that of the revolution is greater than the gap between my [much older] sister and brother and my parents."

In a country of 63 million where more than half of the population was born after the overthrow of the shah and where the voting age is 15, this student's letter represents a view that even the militant regime in Teheran can't ignore. And in the last days of the current presidential campaign, which ends with elections next Friday, the candidates are focusing on the social fabric of Iran.

Many of the issues resemble those in many democracies - corruption, unemployment, inequality and inflation. There is little mention of "Death to America" or "Death to Israel," two of the most common rallying cries of the Islamic revolution.

But being an Islamic republic brings another set of issues, unique to Iran, such as whether women should be allowed to ride bicycles.

"The first thing to remember about these elections is that they're largely about domestic issues," says Patrick Clawson, a lecturer at Washington's National Defense University. "The biggest difference between the two leading candidates is about culture." David Menashri, head of the Middle East and African History department and senior research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Dayan Center for Middle East Studies, is struck by the fact that

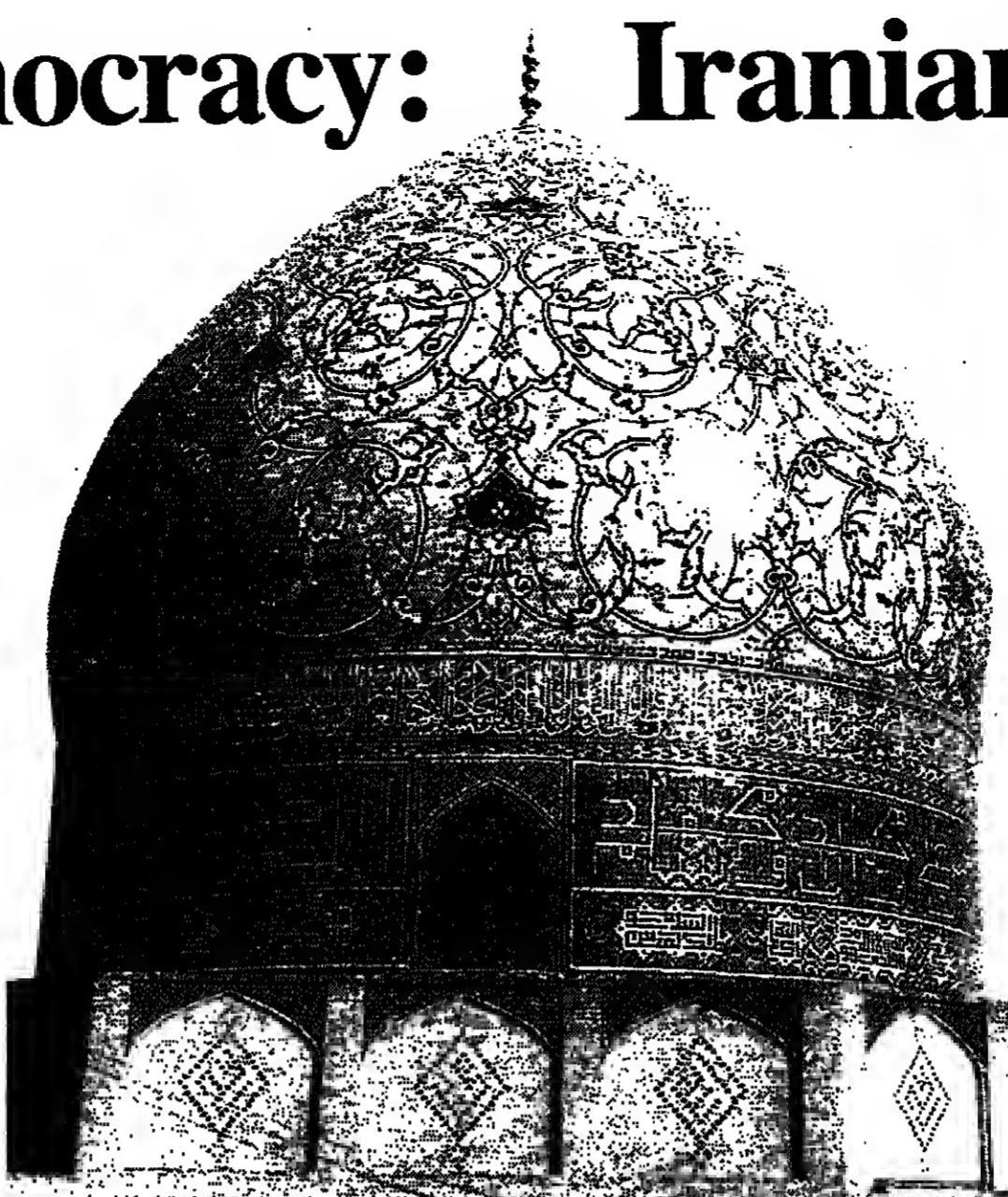
there is a presidential election at all. The practice began after the death of Khomeini in 1989 and has continued every four years. President Hashemi Rafsanjani has already served the maximum two four-year terms permitted under Iran's constitution.

"The most important thing about these elections is that they are coming out in time," says Menashri, who next week will lecture in Iran in the inauguration of a chair for modern Iranian studies at Tel Aviv University, sponsored by Iranian entrepreneur Parviz Nazarian. "This is the most important sign of stability. Rafsanjani wanted to be president again but the constitution said you can't be president for a third term and he obeyed."

Democracy Iranian-style is built on Islamic consensus. Not everyone can run for president or any public office in Iran. The Council of Guardians, a body dominated by clerics, must approve each candidate. The council disqualified about 40 percent of last year's 5,000 entries in parliamentary elections.

In the last presidential elections in 1993, the council approved three out of 100 would-be candidates. The council does not explain its reason for disqualification.

This election - in which a candidate must win 50 percent of the vote to avoid a second round -



mercants. The assessment is that this endorsement means he could use the nationwide network of mosques to bring out the vote. His chief opponent is

socialist-minded clergy and the university students. He is regarded as being close to Rafsanjani. Mohammed Mubammadi Rcyshahri is also a cleric. He represents the radical wing and he is regarded as a threat to Naeq-Noori's efforts to tap the religious constituency. He is most closely identified with the "Death to America and Israel" wing of the electorate.

Reza Zavarei, another cleric, was deputy interior minister. He is regarded as one of Iran's most prominent extremists. His claim to fame was as head of Kasser prison, where so-called "enemies of the revolution" were jailed.

Non-clerics and liberals were disqualified by the Council of Guardians. One of them was Ibrahim Yazdi, an English-speaking former foreign minister who once had a green card and lived in Texas. He had advocated normal relations with America and the creation of a democratic atmosphere in Iran.

The campaign debate has been



Iranian women can shoot, but should they be allowed to ride bicycles? That's one of the issues in next week's elections.

No candidate would dare discuss the huge Iranian unconventional arms program, the pros and cons of the Arab-Israeli peace talks, the Iranian backing of terrorism, or even the wisdom of the death warrant on author Salman Rushdie.

has four entries. The frontrunner is Ali Akbar Naeq-Noori, the speaker of parliament. He has the endorsement of the Society of Combatant Clergy, a group he heads, dominated by conservative clerics and supported by bazaar

Mohammad Khatami, a former minister of Islamic guidance who was forced to resign for his liberal treatment of the press and arts. Like Naeq-Noori, Khatami is a cleric, but unlike him, the former minister has the support of the

limited. No candidate, for example, would dare discuss the huge Iranian unconventional arms program, the pros and cons of the Arab-Israeli peace talks, the Iranian backing of terrorism, or even the wisdom of the death warrant on author Salman Rushdie. But the consequences of Iranian policy are being discussed.

Most of these consequences have been economic. Parliament speaker Naeq-Noori drives in a bullet-proof Mercedes, but most Iranians can't make ends meet. Many of these Iranians don't enjoy the profits of the Organization of the Oppressed, headed by Mubsen Rafiqdust, which invests an estimated \$120 million in Western banks. Rafiqdust's brother, Morteza, is in jail charged with embezzling about \$400 million of these funds.

Iran has improved its finances from the dark days of 1993. It has rescheduled \$10 billion in debt. But 25 percent of oil revenues, which remain stagnant, are allocated for debt repayment. Unemployment remains high - a result of the rampant birth rate - although official figures don't reflect this.

"The biggest problem of Iran is to get out of its economic woes," Menashri says. "The revolution has lost its ideology. The religious politicians rule Iran. Khomeini wanted theologians. Those who rule Iran today don't have high religious authority. Today, the economic situation of the lower classes is difficult. They need housing, education, health care." Menashri views Iran as having turned to nationalism rather than adhere to the principles of an Iranian revolution. "There is a process of pragmatism," he says. "The Iranian revolution is not directed by ideologues. The Shi'ites in Iraq wanted help but Iran didn't give it to them. The Kurds in Iraq wanted help and they didn't get it."

Regardless, whoever is presi-

dent will face strict limitations, perhaps even greater than those Rafsanjani faced. Looking over his shoulder will be Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the nation's spiritual leader and bearer of the revolutionary torch. Since 1993, he has eclipsed Rafsanjani as the most powerful man in Iran, insisting on supporting terrorism - such as the killing of dissidents despite the diplomatic cost. In April, a Berlin court implicated Khamenei and Rafsanjani in the 1992 murder of four Iranian Kurdish dissidents.

Analysts believe Khamenei will bring Naeq-Noori onto an alliance to marginalize Rafsanjani.

For his part, Rafsanjani has no plans to retire from politics and return to his family of pistachio dealers. He is said to be wishing for a Khatami victory, which would help him fulfill his ambition of being appointed deputy supreme leader. The last person in that position was Hussein Ali Montazeri, Khomeini's deputy, who was dismissed in 1989.

Analysts don't believe that in the end any of the candidates will make a difference regarding Iranian relations with Israel or the US. "Whoever wins would have a muddle-through policy," Clawson says.

"If Khatami wins he would be more open to foreign investment. Perhaps 10 years down the line, you can see a government that goes the Khatami route or the

Naeq-Noori road. Now, there isn't much difference for Israel and US." The Dayan Center's Menashri agrees. He says Iran has become a nation that has calculated its risks.

"Until now, it has withdrawn from almost all of its ideological creed," he says. "The question is whether it will also steer away from its anti-Israeli and anti-American attitude. One way of looking is that it already has steered away from the everything else, it will stop its anti-Israel approach. The other attitude is because it has done everything else, the anti-Israel element is the only element in the legitimacy of the regime. After Rafsanjani, it could be one way or the other."

But, for the average Iranian there is precious little time left for the status quo. As the 21-year-old student in Salam put it in his letter, the future of Iran appears foreboding. "The chador [garment worn by Iranian women] was the problem for my generation," he writes. "Censorship and dictates are the problem for every generation. Perhaps we relate to this as normal and natural but I am scared. As a representative of my generation I want to say to you that the revolution, the war and the front are not understood the way they were understood by the previous generation. And don't answer me that this is the work of enemies or wicked people."

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Uzbekistan's Jewish renaissance

Despite a renewal of Jewish tradition, economics is forcing Jews to leave this Central Asian republic, Aryeh Dean Cohen reports



A wall painting in the Amir Temur Museum in Tashkent depicting events in the life of Amir Temur, commonly known as Tamerlane, a 14th century leader considered the spiritual and political father of Uzbekistan. (Aryeh Dean Cohen)

It was altogether fitting for a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to spend Rosh Hodesh Adar II with the Jews of Uzbekistan, traditionally considered descendants of Queen Esther and Mordechai.

But unlike their illustrious ancestors, Uzbeki Jews have a benevolent ruler in President Islam Karimov, whose tolerance has spawned a Jewish renaissance in the Central Asian republic. Indeed, that very attitude has opened the door to an exodus to Israel and the US that may soon spell the end of the proud community.

Like the *kwedo*, or phoenix, an Uzbeki national symbol, local Jewish tradition has emerged from the ashes of Soviet religious repression, with Jews now free to pursue and study their religion. Antisemitism is practically nonexistent, so it's not fear of persecution, or even Zionism, but pure economics that has most of the 28,000 remaining Jewish families waiting for a chance to leave.

Nonetheless, the trip provided a rare opportunity to see the efforts by Jewish groups to rekindle *yiddishkeit* in Uzbekistan, and prepare its Jews for life in Israel. Meeting with the Uzbeki Jews was like discovering long-lost rela-

tives: full of warm embraces, but also concern for their welfare.

Karimov is proud that Jews have lived in Uzbekistan "from time immemorial," a big statement in an area in which Jews have lived for almost 2,000 years. Uzbekistan's rich history is felt in ancient towns like Bukhara, with its towering medieval *madrasses* or Islamic schools and crumbling Mongol desert fortress. But, while the Jewish community may have a centuries-old heritage, that tradition was cut off under Communism.

"Certainly, for the last 74 years, from the time the Soviet Union was in control of Central Asia, their contacts with the international Jewish community were severely limited," US Ambassador Stanley Escudero explained during a briefing in Tashkent. "They simply didn't know, they didn't have the [Jewish] experience... that you have all grown up with. And so for them, this is a very emotional time."

Those emotions were evident during every encounter, as at Or Avner Tashkent, a Habad-run Jewish day school, perhaps the only Habad institution in which a picture of the Lubavitcher rebbe has to share a wall with a portrait of Karimov. But Karimov has earned his spot by openly encouraging the establishment of such schools.

Habad's done wonders here,



Two classmates at the new Or Avner day school in Tashkent, where demand to attend far exceeds available space. (Aryeh Dean Cohen)

largely through the generosity of a local boy who made good: former Tashkent resident and now major international diamond merchant Lev Leviev. With his backing, Lubavitch workers have transformed a former factory into a beehive of Jewish learning. The 350 beaming Jewish pupils in grades 1 to 11 were dressed in their finest, girls with large, colored bows in their hair, boys in white shirts, some Russian-looking, some more Mongolian.

Yosef Levin, a teacher from Rehovot, explained the school, one of several Jewish day schools in the country, only opened this year, but is already filled, with two classes recently added.

The youngsters recited out of textbooks supplied by Jewish Agency and Joint Distribution Committee, and it was easy to feel as though one was in a yeshiva in the US.

There was one major difference: alongside Karimov's picture hung the words of the Uzbeki national anthem and a list of presidential decrees. Clearly, this was not Queens.

And what Jewish community would be worth its salt without dueling rabbis? At the school, we met Rabbi Abba David Gurewitz, an Ashkenazi rabbi who handed out cards reading "Chief Rabbi of Central Asia." Members of the large Bukharan Jewish population pooh-poohed that idea, and follow 36-year-old Rabbi Imoniel Shimanov, Tashkent is more Ashkenazi, while Samarkand and Bukhara to the south have more Bukharan and Sephardi populations.

Acting Israeli ambassador Ilan Ron said 5,700 Uzbeki Jews had immigrated to Israel in 1995, and this had fallen to 3,922 in 1996. About 300 to 500 leave each month now, with thousands more coming as tourists, some deciding to stay.

Karimov's open-door policy has naturally led to many people flocking to the exits, some who are ineligible but still keep trying. "We have a problem," admits First Secretary Michael Dror. "There's a very large demand to be Jewish today. There's a wave of forged documents, and people try to pull one over on us. We're always checking very carefully and if we have any doubts, we either ask for more proof or reject the person." More latitude is permitted in severe situations.

But unity was the theme of our visit to the Israeli Center, a Tashkent cultural center established in 1992 by the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency offering Hebrew and other information about Israel to Jews and non-Jews. After a moving pageant performed by Cultural Center members, featuring everything from opera to ballroom dancing, both hosts and guests had opened their hearts. When the program ended with *Hatikva*, there wasn't a dry eye in the house, a moment made larger by Escudero's later noting that "six or seven years ago, that could not possibly have happened."

Mission chairman Lester Pollak told them: "You are our brothers and sisters, and we care for you." Outside, as we boarded our bus, one of those sisters, an elderly Jewish woman, waved to us, crying into a handkerchief as she did, apparently overcome by this rare contact with other Jews.

The next day we took a rickety Uzbek Air flight to Samarkand, where some 200,000 Jews found

refuge from the Nazis and which produced many great Jewish leaders, especially for the Lubavitch movement. It was easy to understand why they had come: Samarkand is to Tashkent what Jerusalem is to Tel Aviv. Suddenly, we'd traded large, ugly Soviet housing projects for long, well-kept homes on wide boulevards in this sparkling town in the hills.

More Jewish day-school children greeted us at the hotel, but the suitcases are packed here, too. "The community is totally breaking up," Ilana Cooper, a doctoral student from Boston University who had been staying with local families, explained. "It seems every person is planning to leave."

must do it, because I am Jewish and must live in Israel. Everyone who is Jewish leaves. I was born here and like Samarkand, but I must go live in Israel because I think my home is there."

Jewish Agency emissary Simha Harkochav, 25, explained how the Agency tries to prepare the immigrants. "There are people who have been living here for 70 years and haven't learnt anything about Judaism, Israel or their history. What we're doing is trying to slowly give them a little more [information] about the Jewish nation, the State of Israel, and Hebrew." Practical information about housing and jobs is also included. "They get letters from Israel, they know what's up, but

An ally in the Moslem world

If Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov has his way, Western and other investors won't have to go running to an atlas much longer to find out why it's in their global interests to have close relations with his emerging nation.

The most populous Central Asian republic, Uzbekistan has an area larger than California, and borders Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Its 19.9 million people are divided into almost 100 nationalities, including Jews who have lived there for almost 2,000 years.

Karimov means "master of his own fate" in Uzbeki, but fate has also dealt Karimov a pretty good hand with which to pursue friends in the West. His country's central location makes it, as US Ambassador Stanley Escudero put it, "one of only a few states in the region capable of playing an anchoring role" for US interests in the region. And its huge oil, natural gas and mineral reserves, particularly gold, are likely to have Western states soon standing in line to accept Karimov's offers to go steady.

"The fact is that in Central Asia and the countries in the basin of the Caspian Sea, you find the second largest concentration of hydrocarbon resources on the planet," Escudero explained. "We need that oil and that gas and we

need ways to get it out of here that will not be dependent on Russia, so that there are alternatives just in case things don't go the way we would all like in Russia."

The natural gas "will enable us to think differently about the Persian Gulf and the Middle East," he says, "and it will guarantee energy supplies forever," with Israel also a potential beneficiary.

But it's not just what's on the ground that has Western states beating down the president's door - it's also what he says. His strong stand against terrorism and fundamentalism has won him many friends, and the fact that his country - with a population that is 90 percent Moslem - is one of the few bastions of moderate Islam in a region aglow with religious fundamentalism makes him the kind of friend that Israel, in particular, wants to have.

Uzbekistan recently upgraded its consulate in Tel Aviv to an embassy, and Karimov, who expressed great admiration for Binyamin Netanyahu, is expected

to visit later this year.

Israel's ties with Uzbekistan are focused largely around agriculture, since the country is in the midst of retooling its vast agriculture enterprise into more modern, moshav-like arrangements.

The Foreign Ministry's Mashav program, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, is training Uzbeki farmers to use new dairy equipment which they hope will triple or quadruple milk production. "We are helping people to help themselves," explained Avi Horesh, who heads the program in Uzbekistan, along with Natan Ben-Or. "I consider this to be the jewel in the crown in the relationship," Ron said, "and I think that the people appreciate the help, assistance and knowledge we share with them." Indeed, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov called such cooperation with Israel "of crucial importance."

Karimov's liberal treatment of the country's Jewish population isn't hurting his overtures to the West either. "There has never been, and I believe there never will be, antisemitism here in Uzbekistan," he said. US Congressman Gerald Nadler came away quite impressed. "Now I understand the strategic importance of Uzbekistan, that it has a very friendly government that is wary of Islamic fundamentalism, regards the current government in Iran with the same kind of loathing and concern we do, and wants to develop closer ties with the West and Israel. It's very clear where he wants to go, which is where we and Israel want him to go, so we have to help him."



President Karimov

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MIDDLE ISRAEL



By AMOTZ ASA-EL

Considering that he is still breathing, bickering, and - in all likelihood - plotting, eulogizing Shimon Peres's 50-year-long career may be premature.

Death of a statesman

ed electoral defeats culminated in a 14-year presidency during which he played a decisive role in shaping a post-nationalist Europe. But Peres is already eight years older than Mitterrand was when he finally conquered the Elysee in 1981.

'56 to wage war on Egypt and after the '67 war backed the establishment of Jewish settlements in the newly occupied territories. However, like Nixon, an ultimately sober Peres came to understand the geopolitical limits of military power.

Peres watched helplessly as even the Hamas, which he had patronized for 15 years, stabbed him in the back and withdrew their support for him. And so, like Moses at the gates of the promised land Peres looked on as his nemesis of 18 years threw into history's dustbin Peres's burning ambition to lead Israel into the next century.

thin between the quaking tectonic plates of a society in constant transition. And yet under his leadership Labor lost its old ability - maybe even the desire - to dialogue with domestic adversaries.

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VIEW FROM NOV



By MOSHE KOHAN

surely, everybody of Yiddish-speaking provenance knows about that New York Hassid bearing the fine Gaelic name of (pronounced Shawn) Fergusson. Here it is those who don't:

'Oy vay, shoin fargessen!'

antiquity, serving as the Scots kings' coronation seat. In 1296 King Edward I brought it to London, where it lies under the coronation chair of the British kings.

church dignity in Polish and German. The only answer I can think of is that when Polish or Austro-Hungarian clerks were banding out surnames to Jews, some candidates reported themselves as, for example, Moshe Mordechai Hakoben ("the kohen"), and, after explaining, were dubbed M.M. Kaplan.

one of the 13 towns Joshua allocated to the Aaronide priests (Joshua 21 and I Chronicles 6). When David was fleeing for his life from Saul, the priests of Nov sheltered him, gave him provisions, and even gave him Goliath's sword which he had been keeping.

I GAVE the wrong source for the statement about a person's having three names. The correct source is Midrash Tanhuma, Vayak'heil, 1. I thank Mel Bornstein of Elkana for bringing my error to my attention.

SHABBAT SHALOM



By SHLOMO RISKIN

And God said to Moses: 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and tell them none shall be defiled for the dead among his people; but for his kin that is near to him, for his mother, and for his father...' (Lev. 21:1-11)

Sanctifying the roots of our Jewishness

the priest's own parents, such contact is permitted. What makes this passage strange is that the Torah explicitly forbids an individual who becomes a nazir (one who vows not to cut his hair, drink wine or come into contact with the dead) from defiling himself for anyone (Num. 6:7). Given that the sanctity of the nazir is more lenient than that of the priest since it is only temporary, logic would dictate that if the nazir is forbidden from contact with his defiled parents, the priest certainly ought to be similarly forbidden.

Cardinal Lustiger accepted the invitation with alacrity. "It is a fit privilege for me to speak in Israel on Yom HaShoah. After all, virtually my entire family perished in the Holocaust, and I consider myself no less a Jew than my parents and grandparents," he declared in a television interview.

He removed his kippa and threw it to the ground. But then he took two steps backwards. After all, he wondered, where was his father's kippa when they killed him? And so he came to ask himself the most fateful question of his life: what value was there to the lives of his parents and grandparents if he now threw away everything they believed in and died for?

With tears coursing down his cheeks, he kissed the fallen kippa and replaced it on his head. He understood that, if for no other reason than to affirm the value of the lives and ideals of his ancestors, he must continue to live as a totally religious Jew.

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See GIVE, Page 18

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Table with columns: Company Name, Last Price, Change. Includes AMEX and NASDAQ sections.

MISHTANIM

Table of Mishtanim stock prices and changes.

INTERNATIONAL SHARES

Table of international share prices and changes.

NEW YORK

Large table of New York stock market data with multiple columns.

Table of stock prices and changes (continued).

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TASE ROUNDUP

Investors optimistic after CPI report

Mishtanim 264.11 ▲ +0.09%

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By ROBERT DANIEL. Investors in Israeli stocks are optimistic about stock prices and the prospects for an interest-rate cut after it was announced that the rise in the consumer price index was lower than anticipated.

Across the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, 159.5m worth of shares traded. About three issues rose for every two that declined.

The market was supported by Teva, which jumped 4.1% in New York on Wednesday. Weisberg said. Teva represents almost 10% of the Maof Index, and without its rise today, the Maof would have dropped about 0.7%, he said.

Weisberg had expected a rise of 1.2% in the CPI and expected Frenkel to leave the central bank's benchmark rate — which it charges the banks for loans — at 13.9%.

"He'll wait to see the CPI rates during the summer" and Frenkel wants to see an additional budget cut, which government officials are discussing, Weisberg said before the report.

The report could change Frenkel's thinking, Weisberg said afterward. The April CPI is often the year's highest because it reflects spending for the Pesach holiday.

"Any cut Frenkel might make won't be big: 0.3 percentage points, 0.5 tops," he said. (Bloomberg)

Dollar flags against yen, Euro shares weaker

LONDON (Reuters) — The dollar ended almost two yen lower in Europe yesterday and extended its decline this month to almost 10 percent as heightened speculation of a rise in Japanese interest rates hit global currency markets.

European shares finished mostly weaker having started weaker on Wall Street's disappointing overnight close, then remaining under pressure when Wall Street opened down.

In London, shares finished slightly lower as some investors decided to lock in profits ahead of next Tuesday's US Federal Reserve monetary meeting — deliberations which could prompt a near-term rise in US interest rates.

The FTSE 100 index closed 5.7 points lower at 4,681.2. Dealers said British blue chips could see more near-term profit-taking following the FTSE's month-long, 10 percent rally.

"The collapse in dollar/yen itself has been exaggerated by the argument both Japan and the US have engineered a stronger yen to offset the pressures that are building for a rate rise."

The dollar slumped to as low as 114.70 yen in early trade from 117.95 late on Wednesday and although it recovered some lost ground through the session it still ended sharply down at 116.28.

The dollar also weakened briefly against the mark although it closed the day slightly higher at 1.6966 compared with 1.6974 late on Wednesday.

The blue-chip CAC-40 index closed up 1.38 points, or 0.05 percent, at 2,776.01, surpassing Wednesday's closing record of 2,774.63 after erasing its early losses.

Gold closed in London at \$346.95 per ounce, down \$1.70 from Wednesday.

WALL STREET REPORT

Dow hits new record

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks posted a late advance yesterday, boosting the Dow Jones industrial average and other market measures to new highs, as investors wrestled with conflicting signals on inflation and interest rates.

The Dow rose 47.39 points to close at 7,333.55, closing above 7,300 for the first time. The blue-chip barometer had opened the day with a 32-point loss before recovering and trading nearly unchanged until the last half hour.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq market posted the biggest gains, led by Intel, which rebounded from this week's slide on news of two suits alleging patent infringement in the design of the chip-maker's Pentium microprocessors.

Stocks were pressured at the open by a weak bond market, where long-term interest rates briefly shot toward unsettling levels amid some signs that inflationary pressures remain a concern.

DATA COMMUNICATIONS VIA COMMSTOCK TRADING LTD. Foreign financial data courtesy of CommStock Trading Ltd.

Tel Aviv shares data supplied by Pacific Mediterranean Investments, Tel. 09-958-5873. All other data supplied by CommStock Trading Ltd.

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NEWS

in brief

Joint transport talks in Amman

Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy was to meet in Amman last night with his Jordanian counterpart, Bassam Shakhhat, for talks on bilateral issues...

Yaffa Deri: Aryeh married me for money

Yaffa Deri was cross-examined yesterday on the second day of testimony on behalf of her husband, Aryeh, on trial for fraud and bribery...

American warship in Eilat

The American warship USS Nicholson calls in Eilat today, making it the first time a US Navy vessel has ever docked in the port...

Israel sends flour to Albania

Israel has sent 30 tons of flour to Albania, to help alleviate the hunger there, the Israeli Embassy in Rome announced yesterday...

Batsheva Dance head resigns

Mira Idelis announced her resignation yesterday as general manager of the Batsheva Dance Company, citing irreconcilable personal and professional differences with Batsheva artistic director Ohad Naharin...

New rector at Haifa University

Prof. Gad Gilbar was named rector of Haifa University yesterday by the university senate. He replaces Prof. Mordechai Shechter...

Bar-Ilan to give honorary doctorate to Havel

Czech President Vaclav Havel, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky and former deputy Supreme Court president justice Menachem Elon are to be among the recipients of honorary doctorates from Bar-Ilan University...

Geula Amir petitions court to indict Raviv

Geula Amir, mother of assassin Yigal Amir, submitted a petition to the High Court of Justice yesterday seeking the indictment of Avishai Raviv, an informer for the General Security Service...

NE'EMAN

Continued from Page 1

Eitan, who is attending a conference in China, told Army Radio there should be an investigation into the reason the courts had rejected so many indictments filed by the state attorney and attorney-general...

house to stand trial and clear the blemish that hangs over his name. If not, the stain will remain forever... Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said: "Despite my joy at Ne'eman's acquittal, it is not fitting that he return to the Justice Ministry..."

Jerusalem Post Subscription Sales and Service 177-022-2270

Eizenstat reports to congressional committee on post-war restitution:

Review handling of assets

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - The US must reevaluate how it dealt with the heirless assets of Nazi victims in American banks, Undersecretary of State-designate Stuart Eizenstat told a congressional committee yesterday in a wide-ranging review of post-war restitution...

actually paid. The Eizenstat report, conducted by 11 federal agencies, concluded that the neutral states prolonged the war by assisting the Third Reich, that the neutrals failed to turn over to the Allies all the Nazi loot...

Switzerland and Sweden testified at yesterday's hearing. Two other neutrals who were criticized in the report, Spain and Portugal, declined, D'Amato said...

efforts, they continue to be treated as an international outcast. D'Amato has suggested that a 1946 Swiss-Allied treaty, the Washington Agreement, be renegotiated because the Swiss failed to turn over all the looted gold...



Rehov Bar-Ilan rabbis apologize

A delegation of rabbis from the area of Jerusalem's Rehov Bar-Ilan met yesterday with President Ezer Weizman to apologize for attacks on policemen on the street during the siren on Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars last Saturday night...

Four killed on roads

By DAVID RUDGE and Nim Four people were killed in separate accidents around the country yesterday. A motorcyclist was killed in Nazareth, two years after a crash in which his wife was killed and her parents injured...

JDC working to help Polish Jewish community grow

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Israelis may think of the Polish Jewish community as dead or dying, but two American Joint Distribution Committee workers insist it's alive and thriving, building firm foundations for tomorrow on the ruins of the past...

after a family member dies, and they go through their personal papers. "This is something that happened spontaneously - no one was pushing these people, but rather they approached Jewish organizations and told them: 'I'm Jewish. There is no advantage for these people in saying they are Jewish; I would say the opposite...'"

Jewish community leaders also sends its participants to Israel for a special session in July after a year of training. The traditional welfare work is also continuing, with a canten providing kosher meals for the poor and elderly, and a planned day center for the elderly in Cracow...

GIVE

Continued from Page 11

Aust\$100 in memory of the seven schoolgirls from Beit Sheanesh - Myron and Jeff Rogers, Australia. £50 in honor of the birth, to Dina and Izik, of Avinoam Eliaz, our 10th grandchild - Saba and Savva Maurice.

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PORAZ

Continued from Page 9

and environmental reviews. He managed to stop the allocation of special lands to haredi groups without tenders. He also fought to stop special allocations of funds to haredi parties...

PORAZ

Continued from Page 9

ensure that food in the IDF and in hospitals is kosher. He does not object to shopping malls being forced to close on Shabbat, partly to protect the small traders, but wants to leave places of entertainment open...

PORAZ

Continued from Page 9

Although he has often been attacked in the Knesset plenum by the Right and religious MKs, nearly all of them recall the time he went in the face of Meretz and Labor two years ago and agreed to be absent for the vote on the Golan Heights Law to pair off with Likud MK Haim Kaufman who was dying of cancer...

PORAZ

Continued from Page 9

Although he has some criticism of Channel 2, he says: "You can't expect it not to be bound by ratings. It's like asking a fish not to be dependent on water. Ratings is the oxygen of commercial television. On the whole, I think that Channel 2 is a success. If for nothing else, I think it is important that it created an alternative source of television news. I strongly believe in pluralism."

Treasury refuses to erase councils' deficit

By DAVID HARRIS and ARYEH DEAN COHEN

"There is no way the Treasury is going to wipe out the municipalities' NIS 4 billion deficit," a Finance Ministry spokesman declared yesterday, as the Union of Local Authorities (ULA) stepped up its campaign against the ministry.

There have been ongoing negotiations between the Treasury and ULA, with the Interior Ministry attempting to act as go-between. During the talks, the mayors said they would accept the recently formulated proposals of the Efrati Committee on local authority funding, and the recommendations by Treasury wage director Yossi Kucik on tackling pay excesses, if the government wipes out their debts. The Efrati report is likely to be submitted to the cabinet for approval in one of its upcoming meetings.

A ULA attempt to bring 250 garbage trucks to blockade the Prime Minister's Office failed yesterday because police set up dozens of roadblocks around the

country and at the entrances to Jerusalem.

The Interior Ministry has asked the ULA to call off its strike until Interior Minister Eli Suissa and Finance Minister Dan Meridor meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the plight of

the municipalities.

"While we support the ULA's claims, it won't harm them to wait a day or two," said Interior Ministry spokeswoman Tova Ellinson.

Leaders of the local authorities acceded to Suissa's request to

cease the disruption of classes.

However, ULA chairman Adi Eldar said that if the ULA's demands are not met by the government, additional action would be taken against the school system next week.

One government source yesterday

reminded the media that municipal elections are slated for November 1998. "Why do you think they're kicking up such a fuss now?" said the source. "They certainly don't want to go into an election year with problems such as a huge deficit."

Some 255 authorities held work disruptions yesterday. Some 240 closed schools up to 10th grade, while in the remainder all classes took place as usual, the ULA said. The strike also affected many kindergartens. Special education classes were not affected.

David Rudge adds: Israeli Arab council heads are to meet tomorrow to consider intensifying their strike action, independently of ULA, if no solution is forthcoming to the local authorities' financial plight.

"A meeting is scheduled to take place [today] between representatives of the ULA and Prime Minister Netanyahu," said Hussein Suleiman, spokesman for the Forum of Arab Council Heads.

"The outcome of those talks will be discussed at the planned meeting of the monitoring committee [of the Israeli Arab leadership] on Saturday," said Suleiman.

"If nothing is forthcoming, we'll be considering an open-ended strike, even if the ULA decides against such action," he said. The Arab councils have accumulated debts of NIS 450 million.

Weizman resolves Hadassah dispute

By JUDY SIEGEL

President Ezer Weizman managed to make peace yesterday between the two feuding sides in the six-month-old dispute over the Hadassah Medical Organization's recovery program.

After presiding over a three-hour meeting Wednesday afternoon at Beit Hanassi with representatives of the doctors and HMO management, Weizman goaded them into resolving the labor dispute during 16 more hours of continuous discussions that ended yesterday morning.

HMO director-general Prof. Shmuel Penchas, Israel Medical Association chair-

man Dr. Yoram Blachar and doctors' union members signed an agreement under the watchful prodding of Beit Hanassi director-general Arye Sbumer, who participated, bleary-eyed, in the entire session until "white smoke" emerged.

"Hadassah won, and we are very bappy," declared both HMO deputy director-general Prof. Shlomo Mor-Yosef and union spokeswoman Behira Bardugo yesterday when asked who was the victor.

Management, which had refused to cancel unilateral steps for reducing the organization's NIS 187 million deficit, finally agreed to arbitrate them, and the doctors consented to a series of budget-cutting steps, including

a freeze on the number of job slots and the institution of a staff loan to management (instead of a 4% reduction in wages) over four years.

As a result, the 700 doctors at the two Hadassah-University Hospitals in Jerusalem's Ein Kerem and on Mt. Scopus yesterday brought an end to all sanctions and strikes.

Weizman initiated his Solomonic rescue mission after receiving pleas from students at the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School, whose lecturers went out on strike nearly two months ago.

Medical school classes will resume on Sunday.

Ministry: No '97 matric exams in History, English, Hebrew

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

High school seniors who don't know much about history breathed a sigh of relief yesterday, after an Education Ministry committee decided that subject, along with English and Hebrew, would be left off this year's list of required matriculation exams.

However, pupils also got a quick lesson in politics, as MKs blasted Education Minister Zevulun Hammer's last-minute announcement that he had cancelled the lottery and turned over the exam decision to a committee.

The committee - headed by Director-General Benzion Dell and including Pedagogic Secretariat chairman Prof. Ozer Schild and ministry Chief Scientist Prof. Zamira Mevarech - left math, literature, Bible, and civics as this year's required exams.

A ministry spokesman said Hammer's decision to dump the lottery stemmed from its problematic "Lotto" image, which cheapened the respectable educa-

tional framework.

Hammer said in a statement the system also undermined the "standing" and "prestige" of exams that were not required, since subjects could come up in the lottery several years running, as had literature the past two years.

Dell said the committee examined the past two lotteries for this very reason, making sure that literature would be a required exam this year. English and Hebrew, which were required the past two years, were therefore left off this time. Dell said the pupils had not been hurt a bit by the decision, since, "We promised only four exams, and that is what will be."

Hammer, who is abroad, rejected criticism of the last-minute dropping of the lottery. "Just as the finance minister doesn't announce a planned devaluation ahead of time so as not to shake up the economy, I thought announcing this ahead of time would interfere with studies, and would create pressure groups 'for' and 'against' certain subjects," he said.

Former education minister MK Amnon Rubinstein (Meretz), who introduced the lottery, said Hammer's misleading the nation's high school pupils just an hour before it was scheduled was very serious, and intended to prevent a public debate. He said the lottery was designed to prevent any outside influence, but this is impossible once it was put in the hands of the director-general.

MK Dalia Itzik threatened to petition the High Court of Justice over the issue. She demanded an emergency session of the Knesset Education Committee to look into the matter and that Hammer resign, saying: "He who lies and breaks promises should not head our educational system."

Meretz MK Dudi Zucker said the move was tantamount to cheating the pupils, and the fact it was announced at the last moment and that Hammer is abroad made it seem like a trick planned ahead of time.

Two Jerusalem seniors facing the test were split in their feelings.

Ayelet, a pupil at the capital's AMIT-Dror High School, said, "The ministry knew about this all year, and just sprung it on us at the last moment. If we had known this was going to happen, we would have protested." However, her friend, Na'ama, of Pelech, said she was bappy about the decision to exclude history, since, "I was hoping it would be dropped, and I lucked out."



Hollywood welcomes Milo

Actress Goldie Hawn hugs Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo after Hawn was named arts emissary to Tel Aviv, during a benefit dinner Wednesday in Beverly Hills launching Israel's jubilee year celebrations. Actor Kirk Douglas was awarded the title of honorary ambassador at the dinner, which was sponsored by the Tel Aviv Foundation. Following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Douglas Foundation initiated a special project with the Tel Aviv Foundation, a park in the city's Ezra neighborhood.

Cities to mark solidarity with AIDS victims

Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa will join 290 cities around the world to mark an international day of solidarity with AIDS victims. The events here will be organized on Sunday by the Israel AIDS Task Force. The central event in Tel Aviv at 7 p.m. will be a candlelight march from Sderot Ben-Zion, corner of King George Street, ending at 8 p.m. at the Cinematheque.

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WEATHER

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Ahva 17-23	Samarfa 19-29
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BeerSheva 17-22	Dead Sea 14-25

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